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ABSTRACT

This study examines one aspect of the television medium--television news and its encoding practices--that was expected to be affected by changes instituted when socialists took office in France in 1981. It is noted that this government's legal reform advocated a more decentralized system of governance and a liberalization of the state monopoly on television broadcasting. A comparison is made of the respective encoding practices of two French television channels, and the issue of trivialization is addressed as a more complex affair than mere packaging and presentation, i.e., one that assists in the passing of a fairly constant institutional message. The research methodology involved recording and analyzing a week of simultaneous materials offered by the two channels on their 8 pm news programs. The results of the analyses showed that: (1) the dominant ideology is present in and represented by both channels; (2) often identical myths are erected; (3) where initially there appears to be a choice in terms of message, ultimately there is not; and (4) the absence of investigative journalism means inevitably that there is only a series of reflections that are institutionally bound. It is concluded that news information remains, as before 1981, the prerogative of the state, and that there is little reason to expect this sovereignty to be relinquished. (3 end notes) (CGD)

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FRENCH TELEVISION NEWS: PRACTICES OF ENCODING AND THEORIES OF TRIVIALISATION

PAPER TO BE PRESENTED TO THE 1986 INTERNATIONAL TELEVISION STUDIES CONFERENCE

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FRENCH TELEVISION NEWS: PRACTICES OF ENCODING AND THEORIES OF TRIVIALISATION

In 1981 the socialists took office and within the television medium several tangible changes were instituted, amongst them legal reform advocating a more decentralised system of governance and a liberalisation of the State monopoly of the hertzian waves. These particular issues(which have already been the subject of discussion by Raymond Kuhn and myself in a series of papers published by ASCMF(1)) are not the subject of my considerations here. Rather, I shall be examining an aspect of the television medium which, implicitly, should have been affected by these reforms: T.V. news and its encoding practices.

French television of 1981 inherited a peculiar relic from the 1970 Reform which decreed that both TF1 and Antenne 2(the only two channels in existence at that time)should become "homologues et compétitifs" - there was no question of the two channels complementing each other. This meant that simultaneously on both channels similar types of programme were to be diffused(a sort of Napoleonic code for the televisual galaxy). The remnants of this odd legacy are most clearly seen in the Journal Télévisé de 20 heures when both channels present their news programme. Back in 1970, because budget allocations were influenced by popularity ratings, this competitivity created a problem . Namely, that which version of news was watched depended far more on the personality of the news broadcaster than the actual news content since the latter was presumed to be the same. This particular problem still remains today and has led to what has been termed "la banalisation des informations"(trivialisation); i.e. what message passes is less important than how it is presented and who passes it on.

This then is a specificity of French television news. There is, however, a general principle which embraces all television news: namely that this type of programme (on the whole) suppresses the hermeneutic code and as such subverts narrative structure. In this respect TV news could be described as anti-diegetic(rather than non-diegetic since it is not evident to me that TV news sets out to deconstruct narrative structure). Viewed from this general principle,

France's specificity becomes very interesting indeed. For the fact of simultaneity creates an anti-diegetic dialectic which much perforce influence encoding practices. This paper will compare the respective encoding practices of these two channels and , by addressing the issue of "la banalisation des informations", will endeavour to show that the process of this trivialisation is a more complex affair than just the packaging and presentation and that in point of fact it assists in the passing of a fairly constant institutional message.

Method and material.

In terms of method and approach I would like to acknowledge my debt to the very excellent and full paper given by Justin Lewis in the ITSC 1984 conference on Decoding Television News, also to John Fiske and John Hartley and to Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley for their various enlightening contributions to the whole field of encoding and decoding pratcices of news and current affairs programmes(2). I would like finally to acknowledge the work of Herve Brusini and Francis James whose book Voir la vérité was quite illuminating on a number of issues concerning news packaging(3). I might add that much of the anecdotal information contained within this paper comes from Le Monde 's very useful daily section on communication.

In terms of material chosen to perform this investigation, the following points need to be made. Although over the past five years I have seen many examples of the two channels journal de 20 heures, it seemed to me that in order to do justice to the proposed analysis I would need a week of simultaneous material. In early 1985, I asked a French colleague of mine at Orleans University to chose a random week and to record both channels. In the event the week(or rather eight days) selected was from the 15 to 23 March 1985. A period which raises two immediate points of interest : firstly, that it was the electoral period in France of the Cantonales elections; secondly, that a week later would see the dramatic resignation of Christine Ockrent the starnewscaster(and rédacteur en chef des informations)of Antenne 2 - her resignation was prompted by her feeling an increasing loss of autonomy over the way in which she executed her

role as chief news editor. Since that period a number of changes have occurred which I shall invoke. However, the main basis for my analysis will remain the March 85 period and most particularly the date of Wednesday 20 March 1985. On this last point, I should like to add that I have compared my findings with news recordings made this year at the beginning of March and can state with reasonable confidence that with the exception of Antenne2's new logo the differences are very minor. Evidently with the Right now back in the governmental seat, there is every reason to suspect that there will be considerable changes.

I will start with a brief synopsis of the Mark I and Mark II look of Antenne 2(Ockrent and post Ockrent)and refer in a comparative way to TF1 after which it will be time to look at the encoding practices as revealed by the news edition of 20 March 1985.

Until 1981 it could be said that the Journal de 20 heures of either channel reproduced the relationship between the State and the citizen, that the spectator was presented a daily diet of institutional news. In other words news items were related, told. Rooted in their topicality, they were subjected neither to analysis nor to prognostication. After 81, both TF1 and Antenne 2 proposed a new type of journalism. For TF1 this journalism was to be "inquiring, explanatory, non-institutional, challenging,responsable, unisolated from its social and political context, and finally well furnished with news reporting and commentary and investigative journalism"(Brusini and James p. 37, my translation). Antenne 2 under the leadership of Pierre Desgraupes opted almost immediately for a new formula of specialist journalism and dossiers. The intention behind the dossiers was to supply the spectator with information that could invite reflection; in other words an item of news would be dealt with in sufficient depth for it to open out onto wider considerations. Treated this way a news item would signal out a problematic with wider reaching implications. The introduction of specialist journalism into the 8 o'clock news represented a deliberate move away from the process of vulgarisation(where you have the same journalist all over the place, casting his or her commentary). Clearly, our investigation will take into account these proposals and innovations and measure the

effectiveness of their implementation.

In May 1985, Antenne 2 changed its Journal de 20 heures logo. The old style was replaced by a more high tech image. A more dramatic musical score replaces the teleprinter and timpanist music. Before, the image of the newscaster appeared from the left hand corner of a map of the world, took up a central insert position in close-up on the screen with the map still as background and delivered the headlines; now, after a few 3D graphics of a spinning world, the newscaster delivering the headlines occupies full screen but with the spinning globe superimposed upon the medium close-up of the journalist. Certainly the earlier image connotes more the idea of the métier of a journalist, and also the notion that the news is hot off the teleprinter and coming from all over the world(as signified by the map, the shot of the newscaster propelled into centre-screen almost like a satellite and the sound track). Both are perhaps a little immodest in that they present the newscaster as the locus of the information: "the world - me - the headlines". But when compared with TF1, A2's iconography seems to display less arrogance. For TF1 the logo and headline delivery is a much more complex affair. The 3D lettering of TF1 is transformed into a box in which is inscribed "vingt heures" and out of which streams a ray of light swinging from left to right(a searchlight?), this ray of light becomes in turn a cathode ray tube penetrating the numerous embedded boxes(chinese boxes?), finally a blank square opens up into a TV studio plunged into semi-darkness with camera crew standing about, a voice-over reads out the headlines, a mysterious shadow of a figure moves over to the centrally placed desk at each side of which - wall high - are clustered some 40 TV screens, by way of background there is a wall-high map of the world, the newscaster is then introduced by the disembodied voice, the lights go up, medium close-up on the newscaster. Here, all signs point to the channel itself - TF1 - as the repository of news information, as the nerve end of or hotline to world news(40 TV screens); the early visuals tell the spectator how this channel obtains its information: through probing and illuminating(searchlight) and penetrating(cathode ray tube)... investigative journalism at its very best. And yet at the same time an aura of mystery is maintained(the dark shadows before lights up), the headlines too are

shrouded in this cloak of mystery -"ah but here is the chap who will illuminate all of this for you, our newscaster..." "TF1, 20 heures, Claude Sérillon". It is noteworthy, by way of comparison, that Antenne 2 displays the name of the newscaster after we have seen him or her deliver the headlines; whilst - of course - the viewer knows who it is, the important factor to stress here is that the newscaster is not verbally appropriated to the channel nor is he or she subsumed into an equation TF1= 20heures and Claude Sérillon. Thus on a superficial level at least we can be led to believe that the Antenne 2 journalist is less the institution's(Public Television)mouthpiece - we shall see if our study of the encoding practices bears this out.

Organisation of material

Generally speaking, the 8 o'clock news of both TV channels is made up of the same number of items. Depending on the news available the number varies from 12 to 16 items and occasionally has been as low as 9 - as for example in March of this year when Antenne 2 broadcast a very lengthy news item and dossier on Michel Seurat(the journalist held hostage in Beirut).

My starting point in analysing the encoding practices of these two channels was to begin with what could be termed objective data or number crunching. In the first instance I looked at five quantifiable aspects of the two news programmes, each taken respectively as a whole:

1. Number of items, order of presentation and time allocation
2. Order of importance of these items according to the time factor only
3. Time allocated to category or type of items
4. Number of dossiers and special reports
5. Newscaster and non-newscaster time(i.e. reporter, interviewing and special report times)

The next stage was to compare the findings from this data with a view to examining the differences in encoding practices. And this part of the study led automatically to the final stage of this project: whether indeed these two channels were demonstrably engaged in the process of news trivialisation or not and - by obvious extension - whether there has been a move away from institutionalised news as was so fervently proposed in the summer of '81.

I shall now summarise as succinctly as possible the first two stages before offering my deliberations on the last section of this study.

DATA and ANALYSIS of T.V News: Journal Télévisé de 20 heures TF1 et Antenne 2: 20. 3. 85

Excluding the opening and closing exchanges, 16 items make up the content of both news programmes. A first difference must be pointed out, however, because the two news programmes are not identical in length. As is the general practice Antenne 2 is a longer programme than TF1 - and in this instance exceeds by 7mins 54secs.

1. Number of items, order and time:

ANTENNE 2	ITEM	TIME	: TF1	ITEM	TIME
Newscaster time 9m 15secs = 29%			om 42secs = 36%		
intro , headlines and logo:		45secs		"	47secs
1)	FOOTBALL	5.50mins		"	4.55mins
2)	CHOMAGE	3.47mins		L'EMPLOI	40secs
3)	DOLLAR	2.37mins		LA POLITIQUE:UDF/RPR	23secs
				PC	25secs
				SONDAGES	23secs
4)	ELYSEE/shared owner-ship bill	1.55mins		HOPITAUX/greve	2.47mins
5)	PRODUCTIQUE/Mitterrand	1.48mins		SNCF	12secs
6)	3 political items				
	CHIRAC/BARRE	13secs			
	SONDAGE	2.07mins			
	LE PEN	25secs		DOLLAR	13secs
7)	HOPITAUX/greve	1.30mins		LEAD FREE GAS	1.59mins
8)	SNCF/fin greve	15secs		POLOGNE	13secs
9)	IRAQ/IRAN	2.48mins		BRESIL	1.06mins
10)	USA/missiles	1.55mins		"	35secs
11)	ETA	17secs		PRODUCTIQUE/Mitt	3.29mins
12)	BRUNO SULAK	45secs		"	1.00mins
13)	RARE BOOK SALE	1.24mins		CHIRAC/BARRE	35secs
14)	SPORT	1.49mins		RARE BOOK SALE	1.48mins
15)	MINI-SONDAGE/femmes	15secs		CINEMA/prix Vigo	19secs
16)	METEO	57secs		"	1.20mins
close: SAYS GOODNIGHT		23secs		HEADLINE ROUNDUP	42secs
	TOTAL=	31.45mins		TOTAL=	23.51mins

Comments on items and themes:

Item 1: Football this item is placed as a leader because Bordeaux defeated Niepre(USSR)in the quarter finals of the European Cup. For both channels the item is the same but there is some distinction on the themes. Antenne 2 inserts a portrait dossier on the club owner of Bordeaux whereas TF1 provides an interview with the trainer. Antenne 2 is also more explicit about the complications surrounding this second round of the quarter finals.

item 2: chomage/emploi same item, but different title(TF1 use the title "emploi" which incidentally coincides with the government's own terminology)and A2 spend a great deal more time on the subject including a special report on the TUC(travaux d'utilité collective).

items 6,7,8 in A2 and 3,4,5 in TF1 deal with interior affairs and they take up approximately the same amount of time(A2 = 4m 30s and TF1 = 4m 10s, 14 % and 17% respectively of their total individual air time), but there are numerous differences on presentation and content; note for example that the Chirac/Barre story appears on TF1 as item 13 and that it receives more time and also gets film footage.

items 9,10,11 in A2 and 8,9,10 TF1 deal with foreign affairs; the two channels have only one subject in common and a totally different time allocation overall (A2= 5m and TF1= 1m 54s, 16% and 8% respectively of their total individual air time). Note also that TF1 items 8 and 9 on Poland and Brazil deal with issues related to political oppression(Solidarity/Poland)and the end of political oppression(the socialist President elect Neves/Brazil). TF1's USA item 10 gives no film footage of either USA or Brussells - bar the insert image of Reagan with voice-over by the newscaster.

12 out the 16 items cover a same event, 12 out of 16 items are home news items(I include the football item because it is a success story for France)but here the similarity ends. If we now take a look at the order of importance of the items according to the time factor only we can obtain by way of comparison information about the decision making process where prioritising news stories is concerned:

2. Order of importance according to time factor only:

Antenne2	Time	TF1	Time	Ranking
1. football	5.50	1. football	4.55	(1)
2. chomage	3.47	11. productique	3.29	(2)
9. Irak/Iran	2.48	4. Hopitaux/greve	2.47	(3)
6. politique(int)	2.45	7. lead free gas	1.59	(4)
3. dollar	2.37	14. rare book sale	1.48	(5)
4. Elysee/Quilles	1.55	16. meteo	1.20	(6)
//10. USA/missiles	1.55			
14. sport	1.49	3. politique(int)	1.11	(7)
5. productique	1.48	9. Bresil	1.06	(8)
7. hopitaux/greve	1.30	12. Sulak/recel	1.00	(9)
13. rare books sale	1.24	17. headline round up	.42	(10)
16. meteo	.57	2. l'emploi	.40	(11)
17. signing off	.23	10. USA/missiles	.35	(12)
		// 13. Chirac/Barre	.35	
11. ETA	.17	15. Cinema prix Vigo	.19	(13)
8. SNCF	.15	6. Dollar	.13	(14)
//15. min-sondage	.15	// 8. Pologne	.13	
		5. SNCF	.12	(15)

Comments on time prioritisation:

With TF1 the first seven items represent news items related to France, whereas with A2 - out of the first seven items - three deal with foreign affairs. In the case of TF1 the first two items(football and productique)are two different types of success stories for France(success in the international sport scene and success emanating from productive integration between education and industry); the next two items represent two types of problem stories for France but problems which France is facing up to and coping with(the government is trying to find a satisfactory solution to the wage dispute for hospital interns and France's car industry has a policy to cope with the new rulings on emission control); the following ranked item is once again a success story, this time on an individual basis, concerning a French collector of rare books(an old man - TF1's terms - is successful in getting the book he covets at the auction); the weather item, whilst not a success story in itself(the weather prognostic is not good), is delivered with wit and good humour; and finally the last item of the three part political item is a success story for Mitterrand and Fabius whose popularity ratings have gone up. Antenne 2's system of prioritisation seems to be dictated more by the dossier factor - it is interesting to note that all six of its dossiers are contained within the first seven items - hence the mixture of home and foreign news at the top of the time league. If TF1 news(by giving priority, time-wise, to news items concerning France as a nation, as a government and as an industry) appears to articulate the French institutional world, then Antenne 2's prioritisation gives a much less blatant reading. However, if (as was A2's intention)we reflect on the various dossiers and reports, France's institutions are not very far away - but they are not necessarily always presented in the same evident light of success or competence. And in this context the presentation of four of the items retains our attention: the complete news items on unemployment and the latest opinion poll in the first instance and then part of the commentary in the football story and part of the specialist report in the dollar story. With regard to the first two stories, what could have been interpreted as a success for the government is undermined by the ensuing commentary. Unemployment figures are down, announces the Newscaster, thanks in part to the TUC (instituted by the Prime Minister); but the special report demonstrates that this enterprise

represents a mere momentary respite for the young from unemployment. Similarly, in the item on the opinion polls, the meteoric rise in popularity of Fabius is mentioned as is Mitterrand's own gain - but this information is immediately transformed into a projection exercise for the Legislative elections of '86(in every eventuality the Socialist Party will not win a majority). It should also be pointed out that Fabius' success is compared with Barre's standing in the polls as favourite candidate for the Presidency in '88. In two moves then any positive comment about the government, Fabius or Mitterrand is counterbalanced. This "Oui, mais" mode of presenting news bears a closer resemblance to non-institutionalised journalism than the "here are the facts" approach adopted by TF1. The other two items, however, propel the news straight back into the camp of institutionalised journalism. During the football commentary, the Russian goalkeeper gets a special mention: "décidément, le gardien soviétique semble imbattable!" and is shown in action in slow motion(the only slow motion action of the whole footage). The invincibility of the Soviet goalkeeper is set against the concerted efforts of the Bordeaux team, thus making Bordeaux' victory even greater. In terms of Barthes' second and third order of signification the meanings connoted are of mythological and ideological proportions. The myth of David and Goliath(Bordeaux a small provincial town in France against the Soviet invincibility)stands as a metonymy for a small nation successfully combatting a super-power. This myth is repeated in the dollar story in the section where Paul Sassier gives his expert analysis. In his report he intimates that the USA - described as the richest nation in the world -is spendthrift(for the first time since 1914 the USA is borrowing more than it is lending)and has got its economic policy wrong; by inference, because France did not follow the US example(as she was enjoined to do)she has got her policy on a more sensible tack and is now benefitting(more favourable exchange rate). Though certainly not presented in black and white, France as a nation has twice got the better of the two super-powers. Similarly, France will not be dictated to but will follow its own counsel(compare with the dollar story): in the Iraq/Iran item, France -represented this time by Air France - refuses to give in to the Iraqi ultimatum to suspend flights to Teheran; all other international airlines have complied with the ultimatum. France is also a caring state protecting the rights of the individuals(the Quiles Bill, item 4,

ranked sixth, proposes greeter security for those individuals involved in shared ownership; note that this item is accompanied with sentimental music-over).

Already a distinction emerges. In these top ranking items, TF1 unambiguously reflects the various institutions as capable, reasonable, even successful in their activities. A2 is somewhat less unambiguous in that certain items reproduce the relationship between the State and the citizen and others stand outside (the institutions)and refuse thereby this particular transparency(I shall return to this point later on).

The last three quantifiable aspects can be looked at together since they will help to evaluate TF1 and A2's commitment to investigative journalism.

3. Time allocated to category per channel and percentage:

	LEISURE	POLITIQUE	INDUSTRY	SOCIAL	ECONOMY
TF1	(1, 14, 15)	(3,5,8,9,10,13)	(7, 11)	(2,4,12)	(6)
	7m 2sec	3m 52sec	5m 22sec	4m 27sec	13 secs
	= 29%	= 16%	= 23%	= 19%	= 0.9%
A2	(1, 13, 14)	(6,8,9,10,11)	(5)	(2,4,7,12,15)	(3)
	9m 9sec	9m	1m 48sec	8m 12sec	2m 37sec
	= 29%	= 28%	= 6%	= 26%	= 8%

TF1 = Leisure, Industry, Social, Political, Economy

A2 = Leisure, Political, Social,Economy, Industry

4. Number of dossiers and special reports:

In terms of specialist reports and dossiers TF1 carries two(items 7 &12)and A2 six(items 1.2, 2, 3, 4, 6.2, 9).

5. Newscaster and non-Newscaster time:

	NEWSCASTER	COMMENTATOR(reporter)	INTERVIEWING	SPECIAL REPORT
TF1	8m 42sec	7m 25sec	3m 53sec	1m 30sec
	= 36%	= 31%	= 16%	= 6%
A2	9m 15sec	10m 29sec	4m 3sec	6m 48sec
	= 29%	= 33%	= 13%	= 21%

A first and obvious comment needs to be made and bears on the amount of time control the respective newscasters have over the text taken as a whole. The fact that with TF1 36% of the time is taken up by the Newscaster(by the way the figures are unchanged for the sample taken in March 1986: Bruno Masure scores 37% on 4.3.86)duplicates the equation established by the introduction: TF1 remains the predominant space/ locus of and for information and Claude Sérillon -the Newscaster- the deliverer of this information. Within this 36% there is hidden another interesting factor: 5% of this time(1m 17s)is taken up with the Newscaster's voice over footage(in items 1, 3, 7, 11, 13). Thus for 5% of the time the spectator is in the presence of the highest form of control possible(c.f. Brunsdon and Morley p. 61-62): the voice-over emanates from the Newscaster in the studio(control is in his hands and his voice comes from the nerve centre of the studio), the potential openness of the film footage is, in these particular moments, even more extremely foreclosed than when the voice-over commentary comes from the reporter. Antenne 2 appears to be less controlling. Certainly the Newscaster is far less omnipresent and does not participate in voicing-over film footage; but when we look at non-newscaster time and the percentage of voice-over commentary then a different picture emerges.

With both channels, the reporters remain predominantly invisible and silent within the images (visual discourse)relating to non-newscaster time(with the exception of 2m27s for A2, all non-newscaster time for both channels is outside broadcasting, and with respect to both channels I am leaving aside the weather forecaster from my deliberations). TF1reporters are visibly present 20% of the time and A2 7% only; they are audially present(we hear but do not see them interviewing)7% and 10% respectively. Excluding the snippets of interviewees speaking(but where the presence of the interviewer is not signified)TF1 voice-over commentary for non-newscaster time is 58% and A2 74%. To a very great degree then the verbal discourse is privileged over the visual(Brunsdon and Morley p.62)but most especially in the case of A2 where three quarters of the visuals are explained and interpreted for the viewer by a reporter or a specialist journalist. Thus - although A2 spends significantly more time on special reports, dossiers and outside broadcasts than TF1 - predominantly the images do not speak for themselves but have meanings affixed to them. The viewer is in the presence of interpretative(journalism that explains)rather than investigative journalism.

TF1 does not - despite its more "favourable" figures - emerge as the channel closer to its declared goal of investigative, non-institutionalised journalism. For example: one third of its interviewing time is taken up with the expressed viewpoint of an institutional representative of high ranking(Ministre des Affaires Sociales, Georgina Dufoix; Chef Section Chargée du Recel, Parquet de Paris, Dominique Commaret; and the Rector, Académie de Lyon, Maurice Niveau)and only in one instance - the productique item - is the representative's viewpoint counterbalanced by the opinion of those directly involved(the students). Its poor showing in relation to A2's input for specialist reporting and dossiers(two items versus six)would once more confirm that TF1 is engaged for the most part in a purely evenemential(news events as a series of focal points) presentation of the news. This last point is, in some respects, substantiated by the seemingly unsystematic ordering of the items. TF1's text as a whole is less evidently constructed around themes and specialisms and as such appears more discontinous than A2's text(I shall however be returning to this point),and indeed the slightly more erratic time

allocations per category merely serve to reinforce this impression(incidentally there is something odd to my mind about a headline item only receiving 40seconds treatment when the other three receive 3 to 7 times as much attention).

FRENCH T.V.NEWS: TWO TYPES OF DISCONTINUITY

I want now to look more attentively at the notion of French TV news as presenting an anti-diegetic dialectic. And this requires examining their simultaneity within the context of the suppression of the hermeneutic code. In using this term, I am refering to Barthes' definition but more explicitly to the very clear explanation and application it receives in Justin Lewis' paper on Decoding Television News(p. 31 ff). The hermeneutic code establishes links within the narrative through its function of articulating a question and its response - in other words it is a narrative code which establishes and develops an enigma and leads to its solution. Justin Lewis demonstrates how TV news, by pre-empting the development and resolution of enigma, is the only form of television to subvert this narrative structure. Exceptions to this suppression are rare and are, therefore, to be noted.

The hermeneutic code refers to the past present and future of a narrative within any number of contexts and as such the enigma and its resolution represent an imbricated text. TV news pre-empts this occurrence by orientating a news item around a focal point or by the newscaster summarising the story - rather than contextualising it - prior to the subsequent report(c.f. Justin Lewis p. 33-34). By way of illustration let me quote an example, Antenne 2's item on unemployment: rather than stating at the beginning that figures are down because of a governmental programme on community work for the young and then showing the young people at work, the newscaster could start off by stating that a governmental programme to help the young unemployed has been in operation for 6 months and follow this statement by asking the questions - what form has this programme taken and what sort of effect has it had on both the personal(young people) and the official(numbers)level?

TV news may well render visible what is invisible, but in a highly selective and controlled way. To paraphrase Brusini and James: news reflects the particular régime of truth(p.17) and that régime changes as the circumstances surrounding it change. Thus, in France, in the mid-sixties commentary over film footage replaced direct broadcasting(for the most part). In the seventies commentary started to separate itself from the footage and to relate what the image could not show; almost to the point of seeming totally unaware of the image. And it is at this juncture that the photo image started to come increasingly into use (Brusini and James p. 25). Because the commentary "told" more than the footage, a fixed image could suffice to show the spectator who, where and what was being commented upon. This progressive move away from a more open control reflects the attitude of the successive presidencies towards the state monopoly of the Public Service Television from De Gaulle who first perceived TV as a political phenomenon that was to be dominated, to Pompidou who was responsible for instituting the "homologues mais compétitifs" nature of TF1 and A2 and blocking the decentralisation of the ORTF(he considered such liberalisation too dangerous), to Giscard D'Estaing whose telecratic control took on the invisible form of autocensure.

Let us now look at the news information of these two channels in the light of the above comments and determine first how they function in relation to the pre-empting of the hermeneutic code and second how their self-reflexiveness leads to an inevitable trivialisation.

Antenne 2's Newscaster, with three exceptions , summarises all items(bar the weather forecast). With regard to the exceptions, in two instances(items 3 & 9)the Newscaster-Christine Ockrent - presents the item in the form of one or two headlines and then hands over to her colleagues to develop the story; the third instance(6.2)is the projection exercise for the Legislative elections and here Ockrent sets up an enigma("what would happen if...")which a panel of experts will resolve. In all other instances the Newscaster provides all the relevant

information and where there is film footage and commentary it functions as confirmation. Take for example item 2 on Chômage, here is the opening statement delivered by Christine Ockrent:

" Le chômage a légérement marqué le bas en France en février, 2 millions421milles demandeurs d'emploi ont été enregistrés - en donnée corrigée des variations saisonnières - soit une baisse de 0,5% par rapport au mois de janvier. Sans entrer dans la polémique sur les diverses manières possibles de comptabiliser les différentes catégories de chômeurs, un fait demeure ; les travaux d'utilité collective, lancés en septembre dernier, commencent à éponger les poches de chômage chez les jeunes. . . comme l'ont constaté à Mont Louis-sur-Loire - la première commune à avoir répondu à l'intiative du Premier Ministre - comme l'ont donc constaté Geneviève Molle et Paul Côte."

When Christine Ockrent stresses "un fait demeure" there appears on the screen a graphic display of a block graph showing the slight drop in unemployment figures, in voice over(her only one)she relates this drop to the TUC. Ockrent reappears on the word "éponger", she then goes on to say that the coming report confirms the reasons for this drop("comme l'ont constaté"). This fact has already been confirmed both verbally and visually. In terms of encoded meaning, therefore, the report that follows is completely irrelevant(Justin Lewis p. 25). The story has already been told by Ockrent; thus the film footage which follows and the commentary become very much the secondary rather than the primary source of the news item. Ockrent also states that the debate surrounding the ways different categories of unemployed are counted will not be entered into. However, by stating categorically("un fait demeure")that the TUC is responsible for mopping up some of the pockets of youth unemployment she is setting up a direct correspondance between youth unemployment as a category and the TUC as a means of getting that category off the unemployment figures. Furthermore, the closing line of the commentary also makes this point: "Les TUC ne sont pas des emplois, mais ils représentent déjà dans l'esprit des jeunes un moyen d'echapper - au moins momentanément - au chômage" thereby verifying what Ockrent said earlier.

The TF1 broadcast stays with the single focal approach, what I have refered to earlier as the evenemential mode(the only deviation from the single approach occurs in item 11 when a series of focal approaches are presented). Eight of the items are related in their entirety by the Newscaster and in the remaining items he guides us to the focal point to be commented upon by a reporter(" je vous signale que...", "parmi ces mécontents..."). And in every instance, the Newscaster - Claude Serillon - explains the item. The Bruno Sulak item well exemplifies this focalising process because it is so extreme. The story of Sulak's attempted escape with the help of two prison guards is quickly transformed by Serillon into the question of how he managed to pay the accomplices; this question in turn raises the whole problem of receivers of stolen goods. Here is Sérillon's introductory statement:

"Le sous-directeur stagiaire de Fleury-Mérogis et puis le gardien de prison inculpés de connivence criminelle dans la tentative d'évasion de Bruno Sulak. Bruno Sulak qui a été de nouveau opéré au cerveau est dans un état - selon les médecins -préoccupant mais stationnaire. La tentative de Sulak reposait sur sa possibilité de payer les gardiens et de nouveau est posé le problème des recéleurs... de ceux qui gardent les butins amassés par les malfaiteurs. Un rapport interministériel sur la prévention et la répression des recels est actuellement chez M. Fabius. Les affaires récentes ont prouvé l'urgence de revoir le code en la matière. L'enquête de Didier Chauffier."

Starting from the Sulak story, Sérillon sets in motion a chain of themes which could be defined as problem, cause and solution. A specific problem(Sulak's attempted escape)is related to a general cause(receivers)to which will be provided an institutional solution(the report on M. Fabius desk). What is of course also so very interesting is Sérillon's penultimate sentence: what are these recents events? and who is speaking here? Is this a personal opinion voiced by Sérillon ? In fact it would appear that he is refering to the report the spectator is about to see: "L'enquête de Didier Chauffier." But whichever way we view that sentence a deductive reasoning and judgement has taken place. The focus of the report to come then is purely and simply:"les affaires récentes". Gone is the specific problem, gone too is the institutional solution. All we

are left with is the cause in the context of recent events. The special report presents the receivers' business in the light of an alternative market, the representative from the Public prosecutor's office assures us("nous avons la certitude")that the receivers run their business on a supply and demand basis, and the reporter concludes by telling us which items are the most affected(hifi equipment, alcohol and clothing)and that business has more than doubled. In the final analysis, the Sulak item becomes orientated around the single focal point of how receivers run their business. The original item which looked as if it had been broadened out to a wider piece of investigative journalism has in point of fact become narrowed down to a fairly anonymous profile of receivers in action(the film footage incidentally confirms this anonymity, faces are blocked out, hands are seen passing goods).

Both types of pre-empting as described here trivialise the concept of news as information . In the first case we are in the presence of re-duplication, in the second of reductionism. The item is either over or under-signified. I should just like to add here, by way of giving weight to this argument that with A2 every item from 1 through to 13 is either introduced or punctuated by some sort of photo image or graphic display(29 in all) whereas with TF1 only six of the items are contextualised in this way(10 overall in items 2,4,6,8,9,10). The presence of photos and graphic displays - because their signification resides in their relationship to the commentary - function also as a re-duplication of the Newscaster's voice(Brusini and James p.135). Thus A2 and TF1 are consistent in their over and under-signifying practices

I mentioned earlier that exceptions to the pre-empting of the hermeneutic code were to be noted. And the exceptions listed above need, briefly,to be examined in that light. In items 3 and 9 on A2, Christine Ockrent provides the headlines but does not explain the nature in the first instance or the cause in the second of the actual crisis. Item 3 is the dollar story; Ockrent contextualises it for the audience in two ways: a)the drop in the value and b)what it is due to: a localised crisis in the American banking system in Ohio. She then calls on Edouard Lor(!)the special correspondent who exolains the localised crisis. The narrative developed recounts the

frustration of the residents who, because of a rush on savings, have been proscribed by law to withdraw their savings over a certain amount. The report does not explain why this crisis has occurred nor why there is a drop in the dollar. The explanation will be supplied by Philippe Sassier(the economic expert). Philippe Sassier appears(unannounced)at the end of Lor's report. Sassier's analysis takes a look at the dollar in relation to the international monetary scene and concludes: "Nous vivons sur une bombe atomique monétaire, le dollar n'a pas fini de nous donner des surfroids."

This somewhat demagogic conclusion suitably signifies how this item has been developed from a localised story into one of world-wide importance. Lor's report follows on from Ockrent's headline information and goes into considerable explanatory detail on the occurrences in Columbus Ohio. It does not, however, move very far beyond an elaboration of the headlines. Sassier's expert testimony - because it is unannounced -functions in a way totally independent from the Newscaster and the account is completely controlled by Sassier. Sassier develops the narrative by first establishing an enigma around the fragility of the economic system in which we live(why is it so and what are we to do about it)and then resolving it(first in the context of the American economy and then within the international market).

In item 9, Ockrent after guiding us to the foreign affairs section of the programme("L'actualité à l'étranger c'est d'abord et toujours la guerre entre Irak et Iran")frames the story around two headlines a) the Iraqui ultimatum to international airlines not to send flights to Teheran and b)the bombing of several Iranian towns including Ispahan. To the first headline, Ockrent adds the information that Air France is alone in not complying; to the second that today Teheran is celebrating the Iranian new year. She then hands over to the special correspondent in Iran, Patricia Coste whose report develops the second headline only. Coste in Ispahan explains what this town represents(historically), what has happened to it(current bombing)and hypothesises a reason why. Incidentally, it is only when she explains why in form of a question that she appears on the screen. She ends her report with a voice-over explaining how the soldiers and

civilians are coping. Coste's hypothesis/question: are the Iraqis bombing towns like Ispahan to force international diplomatic circles to put pressure on Iran to cease fire? does not receive an answer within her commentary. Instead it seems to receive a partial response in Ockrent's follow-on at the end of this item when she says:" Sur le plan diplomatique, l'Inde lance à son tour - au nom des pays non-alignés - une tentative de médiation. Selon Washington, l'Iran aurait en fait subi une sévère défaite dans son offensive sur le front Sud; l'armée iranienne aurait perdu plusieurs dizaines de milliers d'hommes". It appears at first - and the visuals support this initial response (because on the crucial issue of the enigma(question)we see the reporter and on that of the response, the Newscaster)that within this item an enigma is posited and, if not resolved, responded to.

In item 9, however, this particular enigma is merely the semblance of one. The special correspondent in asking the question is simultaneously answering it; that is, in one sentence she provides both the enigma and the solution. Ockrent's follow-on represents in fact a potential response to an unspoken question which follows on from Coste's own hypothesis: were they successful? And to that she supplies a very enigmatic response! India talks of help, Washington of devastation. There is, therefore, an enigma but it is the Newscaster who provides a partial resolution.

In both instances reporter and newscaster are engaged in rendering visible the uncertainty surrounding the Iraq/Iran conflict, but in a very focalised fashion. Through the story of Ispahan. If we refer back to the headlines of this item, it is evident that Ockrent had more control than at first seemed apparent since it is she who guides the story from the international aspect of the item to the very localised affair of the bombing of Iran's second largest town at which point Coste picks up the story. This control becomes confirmed in the last section when Ockrent - by way of answering the question of Iraq's success - widens the story out again into the international scene.

Of these two exceptions then, only the first builds up a narrative within its own parameters(see Justin Lewis p. 35) without pre-emption from the Newscaster. The second item resembles, through its presentation, the evenemential mode more readily associated with TF1.

The above analyses demonstrate that the anti-diegetic dialectic resides in the two predominantly distinctive types of discontinuity which emanate from the different encoding practices employed by these two channels. A2's encoding practices reflect for the most part the pre-emptive style of summary, TF1 those of the evenemential. This distinctiveness raises a further point. When pre-empting the enigma the newscaster is (once again) elevated to a position of supreme control. When presenting news in an evenemential mode(news as focal points only)discontinuity is at its most evident, signifying power at its least. In the first instance the newscaster is more important than the item; in the second, the item is so focalised that the story cannot develop. In both instances the item itself is without autonomy. This then is a first aspect of the process of trivialisation. But there is a further aspect that needs to be established. For - as the next part of the analysis will show - although their encoding practices differ, both channels reproduce institutional news(i.e. the relationship between the State and the citizen). In being reflexive of the institutions, news information - because as a state monopoly it is part of those institutions - is self-reflexive. Further, because it reflects those institutions, information news has become(as have the institutions)mythologised; but, because it is self-reflexive, it must also perpetuate(through constant repetition) those myths which support it. And it is here, I suggest, that we find the locus of news trivialisation.

I would like lastly to address this issue of self-reflexiveness and trivialisation with regard to both channels' news programmes. I stated earlier(page 12) that A2 occasionally appears to shift its position with regard to the relationship between the State and the citizen. At times it reflects institutional news and at others not. I would now like to suggest that when it refuses this particular transparency it only does so by turning around the reflection(i.e. the them and us syndrome). The relationship is still acknowledged. I would also like to suggest that this

inversion is for the most part(with two exceptions: the TUC and the Hospital items)illusory. The encoding practices of TF1 for their part do not enter into this particular dialectic and so one can assume a less ambiguous reflection.

I have chosen the Productique item to facilitate this discussion but I shall make passing reference to the Hospital interns strike item to show that similar patterns persist. For example:In both items, TF1 inserts an interview of an institutional representative(the Rector of Lyon Academy in the Productique item, the minister for Social Affairs and Solidarity in the other). Alternatively, A2 interviews persons within the institutions(students in the first case and a doctor in the second). A first, superficial distinction emerges: TF1 solicits the opinion of those effecting, A2 that of those affected. With TF1 an institution speaks to (and for)the citizen, with A2 the position appears reversed.

TF1places the Productique item immediately into a didactic context with Claude Sérillon as the teacher: "Productique'84, ce néologisme est le titre d'un prix récompensant les lycées techniques qui ont réalisé pour le compte de l'entreprise différents systèmes augmentant la productivité des dites entreprises." Having offered the definition of the term(using two rather scholarly expressions: "néologisme" and "des dites")he goes on to tell us who won first prize(commenting in voice-over the footage of Mitterrand giving out the prize) and then to explain how it works. This part of the lesson completed we are sent off to Lyon to see theory put into practice: didacticism has given way to pragmatism; but clarity in the expository style still persists. The reporter informs us - as the camera wanders through the classrooms -that there are two gains to be made from these exchange agreements between lycée and industry. Firstly, for the manufacturing industry: they can profit from the grey matter of the teachers ("la matière grise des enseignants"); and, secondly, a pedagogical and financial gain for the lycées. At last, it is the turn of the students to voice for themselves what they obtain from this exchange(working for something, giving something of themselves). We are then sent out into the playground and told by the reporter how teachers have to stay abreast of the latest technologies.

Next we are taken to the Rector's office(he oversees the entire education profile for the whole of the Lyon region)who gives us his opinion on what education should represent. We are back into theory:"Il m'apparait évident, depuis toujours d'ailleurs, que l'enseignement, l'école, n'a pas le monopole de la formation de l'éducation mais que la société toute entière et au premier plan les entreprises, les agences économiques ont une responsabilité d'éducation et de formation complémentaires de l'école." And the concluding footage puts theory once more into practice by transporting us into a manufacturing company and showing students gaining first hand experience. One student interviewed disclaims any difference between working on a project in school or a factory("c'est pratiquement la même chose"). A second one, however, does confirm the advantages of a factory experience. A quality controller for the company extolls the value of the industrial placement: "Ce qu'il faut pour ces jeunes c'est de voir l'exécution et le mener à bien, et de voir les problèmes(at which point he thumps the disgruntled student who is partly slumped on the table)qui se rattachent au cours de la réalisation(the student grimaces). Bon, les TUCs c'est très gentille, c'est très drôle, mais je dirai que c'est mieux au laboratoire et il faut que ce que ces jeunes voient chez nous c'est le passage de l'étape laboratoire à l'étape industrielle." The final shots show boxes of the end product, proof of the success of the exchange contracts:"La phase industrielle, la voici, says the reporter,une centaine d'automates marqués d'un petit Charlot prêts à partir vers une entreprise qui fabrique des robots." Education as an institution is omnipresent. Even the story itself is structured like a class lesson. Codes and conventions of the school as a signifying entity are very much in evidence: the authority figures(Sérillon as the teacher, the Rector as the education expert, the controller as the disciplinarian with his naughty pupil), the division of school into two spaces(classroom and playground), the scientific approach to learning(theory and practice), the students as willing or unwilling consumers of learning.

Antenne 2's presentation of this same item takes a totally different form and is very much framed and focused within the Elyseen space and around the President. Christine Ockrent introduces the item, there is a photo image of the President in the top left part of the screen: "Le

chef de l'Etat a voulu marquer son intérêt pour l'esprit d'invention et l'esprit d'entreprise des jeunes en recevant cet après-midi à l'Elysée les lauréats d'un concours organisé par le ministère de l'éducation nationale." There then follows footage of Mitterrand standing on the podium with the winners, a written logo informs us we are at the Palais de l'Elysée, the voice-over commentary explains what productique means:" La productique c'est ce qui permet d'améliorer le rendement, la productivité tout en modernisant l'industrie. Ces lycéens du technique qui sont recompensés ont crée en liaison avec des industriels des machines ou des procédés nouveaux. On est loin de l'idée reçue selon laquelle la technique est juste bon pour ceux qui n'arrive pas à faire autre chose." This last statement is confirmed by a first interview of one of the winners("on participe au progrès" he concludes). Back inside the Elysée, Mitterrand is shown around the exhibits, the reporter carries on his commentary telling us this time what Productique represents for the schools and for industry: collective work and appreciable help; two subsequent interviews one with a student the other with an industrial confirm this interpretation. The concluding section takes us back to the prize giving, Mitterand is handing out the prizes this time and the reporter in voice over summarises the message of Mitterrand's speech: "Avant de remettre les prix, le Président Mitterrand avait dans son discours souligné que - pour lui - la modernisation de l'école et celle de l'industrie était la seule façon de garantir les emplois de demain." Within this item, Mitterrand is present 60% of its duration. From the very start of this item his dominance is signified by the photo image(it reduplicates Ockrent's words: this is the person I'm talking about). Whilst no institutional representative is actually interviewed, the topic is so dominated by Mitterrand's presence that 'Productique' readily becomes identifible with him. Small wonder then that all the interviews agree with the commentary given by the reporter; and that even the summary of the President's speech coincides with the reporter's initial interpretative statement. While giving the impression(through the interviews)of reflecting the individual's point of view, closer examination would suggest that the opposite is true and that instead what is reflected is the Presidency as an institution committed to modernisation. Another point that needs to be made concerns the structuring of this item. After Ockrent's introduction the film footage shows the

winners (prizes in hand) and Mitterrand already on the podium. The last part of the footage shows Mitterrand handing out these same prizes. In a sense the structure is that of a flash-back, but the editing that it implies raises the issue yet again of the relationship between image and commentary(footage fitting the commentary in this instance). It also lets us know that the whole convention of calling on reporters to relate an item as if directly broadcasting back to the studio is just that, a pure convention. And in this last respect and within the notion of encoding practices TV news - by making visible this code and demonstrating how it is just a convention - is functioning in a self-referential way.

In a similar way the footage of A2's Sulak story also reveals this self-reflexiveness as does TF1's footage of the fences at work. A2's footage shows the police scurrrying down corridors with the arrested men(accomplices of Sulak) and bustling them into rooms; this event occurs twice(once for each accomplice) and both times the doors are firmly closed on the camera which ends this part of its footage with a close-up of the door knob. In both cases - A2 and TF1 - the footage is shot in a cinéma-vérité style: the camera is out on the streets or in the police station corridors catching reality as it happens, the synchronised sound is audible. The actual footage through its composition and types of shots recalls scenes from TV cop dramas with the one exception that we do not see the faces of the "felons". The film footage then is invested with more than just two straightforward orders of signification. Yes, on the one hand, the specificity of the first-order sign is replaced by the second-order sign. But that second order sign also connotes other meanings because it becomes imbricated into a film genre that is other than a TV news item. For example, in A2's story the first-order sign signifies :" these are the two accomplices who willingly aided Sulak to escape"(without the commentary or Ockrent's introduction this could not be inferred from the footage)becomes :" here is the police successfully arresting and charging two men". But the item also, by and because of the camera style, conforms to those codes and conventions associated with a cops and robber film; and it is at this point that the film draws attention to itself because as well as representing a news item it is also displaying itself as other - as a genre not readily associated with the encoding practices of news items. Thus at the

same time as this item reflects the State-citizen relationship and activates the myth by which the police as an institution can be apprehended, it is also functioning - through the use of parody and within the parameters of TV news as an institution - in a self-relfexive manner and revealing how encoding practices function to create myths.

In A2's news the TUC and the hospital items are the only ones which appear to represent a break with institutionalised journalism in that they reflect the position of the individual in relation to the State and that they record misgivings(TUC)or outrage(Hospital doctor)at measures proposed or enacted by the State. It should of course be pointed out that in both these instances the State remains invisible and is refered to as the 'Premier ministre' and the 'Conseil municipal' for the TUC item and 'les représentants du ministre des affaires sociales' for the hospital item. No such claim can be laid for TF1. In fact it is not uncommon for TF1 to establish a link between an item and an institution if it is not immediately clear that there might be an appartenance(for example in the rare book auction item Sérillon manages to insert the minister of education: "En pleines prémices du Salon du Livre - alors que le ministre de l'Education veut réactiver la lecture à l'école - aujourd'hui à l'Hôtel Druout a été mis en vente un livre ... Les Fleurs du Mal de Baudelaire...."). It is also not uncommon for the Newscaster to link M. Fabius with some item(for example the Sulak story)or to slip in asides mentioning M. Fabius(as when Sérillon introduces the Chirac/Barre item : "un évènement politique ce soir - en dehors de l'émission Parlons France sur TF1 à 20.30h avec M. Fabius - un événement politique c'est à l'Hôtel de Ville à Paris où M. Jacques Chirac doit s'entretenir en audience privée avec l'ancien premier ministre M. Raymond Barre... C'est la première rencontre depuis plusieurs mois... les deux anciens premier ministres se sont isolés." This is item 13 and Sérillon had already mentioned Fabius' appearance at the end of item 2).

Institutional representation of a direct nature is certainly higher in TF1 than in A2(which would confirm all allegations that TF1 was until the recent elections the "chaîne du pouvoir"). However, as the above analysis of the Productique item demonstrated - although the style may

differ and the representation be less immediately visible - the one way reflection of institution to individual prevails just the same. And this suggests that the myths erected will equally remain connotatively similar. Take for example the football item: I have already demonstrated how A2 had erected the myth of David and Goliath around Bordeaux' success over Niepre(see page 11); TF1 for its part reveals in its interview of the football trainer a very similar myth; in this interview the win becomes a moral one when he comments:" je pense que les Russes ont fait tout ce qu'il fallait pour nous mettre en colère, et je crois que ce soir l'équipe s'est bien resaisie et a voulu surtout donner une belle image du football français."

What I believe this study has shown is that the dominant ideology is present in and represented by both channels; that often identical myths are erected; that where initially there appears to be a choice in terms of message, ultimately there isn't one - merely a choice of packaging and that that packaging - though different - has the same effect of trivialisation; that the absence of investigative journalism means inevitably that there is no transparency in the sense of TV news offering the viewer a window on the world but only a series of reflections that are institutionally bound. News information remains - as before - the prerogative of the State and there is little reason to expect this sovereignty to be relinquished.

FOOTNOTES:

1. ASCMF Review, Numbers 21 and 22, March and July 1985

2. Reading Television, John Fiske and John Hartley, Methuen, 1978; Everyday Television: 'Nationwide', Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley.

3. Voir la vérité, Herve Brusini and Francis James, Presses Universitaires de France, 1982.